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THE PEOPLE'S PULPIT

THE REV. R. J. CAMPBELL, M.A., D.D.

VISION AND LIFE

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

THE REV. R. J. CAMPBELL, M.A., D.D.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Vision and Life	5
Spiritual Evolution	15
Remembrance Day, 1926	26
The Advent Summons	35
Fraternity in Christ	44
The Sacrament of Love	54
Hidden Wisdom	63
The Things that Abide	72

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VISION AND LIFE

Preached in Holy Trinity, Brighton, September 5th, 1926

"For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

1 Cor. xiii, 12.

The late Professor Henry Drummond once wrote a little book which he called "The Greatest Thing in the World." In the exposition of his theme he mentioned that he knew of a man who read this chapter through once every day for a term of years with the result that it changed his whole life. It is indeed a wonderful chapter, even considered as a masterly piece of writing, a literary gem; but considered as a presentation of spiritual experience it is almost without parallel; probably there is no chapter in the New Testament which has exercised greater influence upon the minds and hearts of men, chiefly because of the profound and beautiful analysis it gives of the supreme virtue of Christian love. And yet this is not all it contains. I think we might truly say that the passage which forms my text is quite as suggestive and helpful in its way as the rest of the Scripture of which it forms a part. It shows that the apostle was well acquainted with one of the characteristic problems which confront the mind of our age and that he was in possession of a satisfactory answer to it.

For is it not true that one of the most perplexing things in connection with earthly life is the limitation of our knowledge? When I was young we used to hear more than we do now of the word Agnostic, but we are as familiar with the state of mind it was used to denote as people were then.

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Not long ago one of the ablest of our diocesan bishops said to me: "We live in an age of immense scientific discovery; yet what do we know? We know nothing." I was at once reminded of the avowal made by the great French savant, Professor Richet, to Sir William Barrett. Flinging out his arms with a gesture of abandon, this man of more than European reputation exclaimed: "We think we know, but we know nothing, nothing whatever." It cannot be imagined for a moment that either of the distinguished persons who thus spoke meant that we are left without real guidance in life or any spiritual reality that we can believe in. They simply meant that the mystery of existence is not one whit less a mystery for all our increase of knowledge of the way in which Nature works; the more we know the less we know; we are daily widening the circle of our acquaintance with the phenomenal world, but the larger that circle grows the greater becomes the area of our ignorance of what lies outside it. Nor is this perception altogether new. The unknown writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes said long ago: "Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it." And one of the characters in the Book of Job gives the observation of the thoughtful mind in ages long gone by: "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow."

I do not see how anyone can go through life with faculties alert and come to a very different conclusion. We are apt to think we know more than we do because we become accustomed to the presence of fathomless mysteries all around us; we label them with fine names and then half-delude ourselves into believing that we

know something of what they essentially are, which is just what we do not know. Take the most insignificant flower in your garden. Examine it under a powerful microscope and marvel at the beauty of its structure, at the perfection of its functions, at the tokens of ingenuity it exhibits in the manner of its creation and maintenance. How much wiser are you? What do you really know of the reason why that flower blooms, if there be a reason, or what it is that is shaping its growth, designing its pattern, causing it to rise out of the earth and unfold itself before you in the particular form it assumes? The answer is that you know nothing of these things; the veil of mystery is drawn over the genesis and ultimate significance of that little flower.

Are the facts otherwise with regard to the greater questions of life? Not at all. There is nothing you can ask about the being of God to which unaided reason can give a direct and complete reply that we can understand. The late Mr. Clutton-Brock once said with considerable cogency that we only land ourselves in confusion when we postulate the existence of God as an explanation of the universe. It is an explanation that does not explain, he remarked, for you have only disposed of one mystery by invoking another; the real mystery is why anything should exist at all.

Here we are, self-conscious rational beings—up to a point—dwelling in the midst of a creation of infinite complexity and wonder; the more we know about the world we live in the more wonderful does it become to our perceptions. No man of serious mind can possibly contemplate this majestic universe that is daily revealed to our senses and intelligence without standing in awe before it. Yet what is it; where did it come from; how did it begin to be, if it ever had a beginning? I tell you, that is the really profound problem that con-

fronts the reflective intellect and baffles the most searching enquiry, not the problem of the being of God. That there should be a God, in the New Testament sense of the word or any other, is not one iota more difficult of comprehension than that there should be a universe. Yet here is the universe; here it is, not to be explained away; and we ourselves belong to it and are no small part of the mystery.

Let us see what light this text of ours has to throw upon it. You observe that in the context a somewhat arresting statement is made. The apostle says that the thing that is real in itself is love; it is not a mode of anything else; it will not become merged into some higher reality to be revealed by and by. "Love," he says, "never faileth." It will always be there, whatever else may come and go; it is at the back of everything; our present experience of it may enlarge and deepen, but it will not be superseded; if we lay fast hold of love, and build that into our souls, we may know of a surety that we are in contact with the heart of the universe. Knowledge of any other kind is more or less ephemeral. "We know in part," he tells us, "and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

Our knowledge of life is like a child's puzzle picture formed of a hundred different pieces. If you were to pick up one piece only, however highly coloured, however attractive-looking in itself, you could not infer the whole from your observation of that one piece. It is only when you see that piece fitted into its proper place with all the rest that you really understand what it is; you no longer think of it as merely an irregularly shaped bit of wood or cardboard; perhaps you do not think of it at all; it is now viewed in conjunction with the whole to which it pertains; that which is in part is done away.

The metaphor employed in my text is not dissimilar: "we see through a glass darkly." This is explained by most commentators as meaning that a man looking into a mirror with a darkened surface sees but a vague outline of his own features. The mirror might be a piece of metal or polished wood such as was often used for the purpose in New Testament times, and of course the reflection given would be very imperfect. But I think the commentators are wrong. I do not believe the apostle is here alluding to the reflection of a person's face as seen in a mirror; he is speaking of looking through a dull glass at something that lies on the other side—"we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." You are, let us say, in a darkened room into which a little light struggles through an almost opaque window-pane. The sun is shining outside; all is gloriously beautiful there; you can dimly discern the features of a friend who is waiting for you there Presently he will open the door and you will go forth and greet him face to face.

When the veil is lifted, when our eyes are fully opened, when we have passed out into the light, we shall know as God now knows us. Know what? Know everything that God knows? My text does not say so. It may be so or it may not, but that is not what is affirmed. What it says is this: We are to come face to face with our divine friend; we are to know God as God knows us, and in that knowledge all else that we need to know will become clear.

Let me emphasize this one point. We can know now in some degree the truth that we shall finally come to know in perfection. This is really the governing thought of my text, the one that the writer most wants to press upon our attention. We can know now something that we shall never have to unknow; we can know what God is. You might be master of all the

learning of all the ages and not be a step nearer to understanding the mystery of life; you might have all the skill, all the ability, all the power of the most outstanding among the leaders of men and the pioneers of great achievements, and yet fail to lift even the tiniest corner of the veil that hangs between us and the eternal source of all that is. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away . . . but now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

Let me pause here to ask you a question the answer to which is contained in the question itself: It only needs to be put for its significance to become plain. It is this: Have you ever reflected upon the truly astonishing fact that there is a kind of faith on which all men are at one, namely faith in the authority and supremacy of goodness? I do not mean that we fully understand what goodness is; we only know in part; we see through a glass darkly, not yet face to face. But we all without exception believe that in so far as we do know what goodness is we ought to seek to conform our lives to it at any cost; we ought to honour, reverence and obey its requirements wherever found. Now why should we do any such thing; and why should we be so sure, as we all are, that this is the thing to do? We do not need to argue or dispute about it; we are all agreed on the subject to begin with; the only room for difference of opinion is as to what constitutes goodness in any given case; once we arrive at a settled conclusion on that point discussion ends and action begins. It does not follow that we are always willing to do what we know in our hearts we ought to do; that is quite another matter; but in theory at least we pay our undivided homage to the existence of an ideal good which we are called to dis-

cover, vindicate and serve. I do not know of anything more impressive than that one fact in the whole range of human history and experience.

It is vitally connected with our thought about God. For what is God if He be not this? In the abstract it is conceivable that God might not be good; He might be evil; and men have often toyed with that idea—that is to say they have thought of the tremendous power that has created us and is the source and soul of the universe as being perhaps unmoral, unloving, indifferent to our fate or even delighting in cruelty. At the present day the favourite conception with those who doubt the validity of the Christian view of the nature of God is not so much that He is cruel as that He neither knows nor cares anything about us; but it was not always so. For instance, the great Greek legend of the fate of Prometheus is an excellent illustration of the point. Prometheus, you remember, was represented as one of the immortals who, for having conferred upon mankind a benefit that increased the sum of earthly happiness, was for that reason chained to a rock for ages by the supreme god Zeus, a vulture being set to prey upon his vitals. This terrible punishment was for doing good; it has often been regarded as in principle an anticipation of the cross of Christ and been compared thereto. Shelley in his great poem, "Prometheus Unbound," represents the sufferer as unyielding, thereby showing himself a higher and nobler being than the malignant deity who had the power to torture him. At the beginning of the poem he represents him as thus addressing his divine oppressor:

> Regard this Earth
> Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
> Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
> And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
> With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.

Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
Or mine own misery and thy vain revenge.

. . . . . .

These are mine empire,
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God.

You see the idea. It is that Prometheus is suffering in the service of something higher than God though not as strong, something more worthy to be God than God Himself is. But the poem concludes on another note. This *is* God, this that requires man's utmost devotion, this in whose vindication cross and shame are willingly accepted and borne; and this it is which has the last word, no lesser power; there is indeed no other God.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

That in substance is the meaning of my text too. God is the best that imagination can conceive or heart adore. We all see it now, dimly, gropingly, uncertainly; we know it in the worship that we spontaneously accord to all that is lovely and tender, compassionate and gracious, noble and sublime in human character and life. But we know it best of all in Christ. Nay, without Him should we know it at all? It is in Christ that our vision of the good has been made actual, in Christ—the good that is eternal love—and in the cross of Christ—that the righteous love of God has been made manifest for our deliverance. If Christ had never fought His fight with the powers of darkness we should not be crowning Him with many crowns to-day.

It has sometimes been said that the task before Him in Gethsemane and on Calvary was not as hard as yours and mine because He knew what lay on the other side of it as we do not. That is not true. He knew in part, but full knowledge was withheld from Him just as it is from us or there would have been no glory in His triumph over death and hell. That terrible cry of dereliction from the cross was as real as any similar one has ever been that was wrung from a breaking human heart: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But for our comfort we know what followed. Our blessed Redeemer had gone unfalteringly and alone to Calvary's foot, and now when He was helpless in the hands of His foes and least conscious of His divine resources, the Father stooped in the infinitude of His might and bore Him through the dread ordeal which has seated Him on the throne of power for evermore

This, in your degree, is what God is now doing with you, and it is what you would wish Him to do if you could know as you are known. The things to be gladdest about in this world are not those that come easiest, not those which are most agreeable to our mortal flesh, but those which have called forth from us what is most Christ-like in will and deed. You know better than anyone can tell you just what those things are, and you are never alone in dealing with them however much it may seem to be so. I admit that it is often hard to realize that this is the truth. Who among us is never tempted to give way, to drop down to lower levels of feeling and action, to be unfaithful to one's heavenly vision, to escape the struggle and the strain? No doubt some of you are so at this very moment. You want to avoid sacrifice, to be and do something other than in your inmost soul you know you ought to be and do. You know what is required of you to-day,

but you cannot see to-morrow ; and you say to yourself, " Oh, if I could but get a glimpse of what is on the other side of the mystery ; if I could but know for certain what this life of mine is making for ; if I could be as sure of the outcome as I am of the problem ! " That you cannot be ; it would not be well that you should. That is why faith is of so much more importance than sight in this world. Its appeal is higher ; its results are finer. Determine, then, that from this time forth your life shall be committed into the hands of Christ to do with as He sees best ; determine that in His name you will do, not that which cowardice or selfishness or worldliness would prompt you to do, but that which you know your Lord expects of you. Do that, careless of either failure or success, or of the world's good or bad opinion, and leave the result to Him. For when you know as now you are known, when you know Him as He knows you, and know the utmost meaning of your present probation, you will find that that which you now see as through a glass darkly will be your exceeding great reward in glory everlasting and world without end.

SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

Preached in connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary of Claremont Mission, London, October 2nd, 1927.

> "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
>
> EPH. iii, 14-20.

THIS noble benedictory prayer consists of a sequence of thought which is not only specially beautiful but spiritually helpful in a high degree. Incidentally it suggests a way of approaching the great mystery of human life in relation to God and things eternal which overcomes the difficulties created by too intense concentration upon things visible and temporal. Observe the note of thanksgiving and joy that runs through it, concluding with the reverent ascription: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." In these exquisite and tender terms a beloved pastor prays for his flock, requesting for them an inner quickening and enrichment which is to culminate in an ever expanding experience of the love of Christ and of life eternal and divine. Let us look at its constituent clauses severally, and I think we shall find that it possesses a value for us at least equal to that which it possessed for the apostolic Church.

(1) *It emphasizes our kinship to God and to an order of being which is not wholly of this world.* Here is our spiritual pedigree We belong to a family whose truest affinities are not with the dust and the clay of mortal existence but with the perfection of eternal glory. It may be that in this affirmation the apostle is thinking of the Church of Christ, one and indivisible, on earth and in heaven, a spiritual household gathered out of and distinct from the rest of the world ; but it is more probable, and more fully in accordance with the firmly held beliefs of the same teacher as recorded elsewhere, that what is here meant is that the entire human race, past, present, and to come, is the offspring of the Most High in a sense that is not true of any other creatures that share with us a terrestrial habitation. It is in what stamps us distinctively human, as contrasted with all other living things in this world, that we are likest God. He is our Father, and the whole family of mankind in heaven and earth is named of Him, because of our possession of a moral nature and a creative mind and will. These are the image of God in us ; these constitute man ; these are the attributes which became ours when, in the words of the second chapter of Genesis, God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul. We can know God, love God, commune with God ; and in this knowledge, love, and fellowship we fulfil our destiny and not otherwise.

It is worth while reminding ourselves of this anew, for of late some tendency has been exhibited to minimize the uniqueness of the human family in the scale of creation. I do not mean that the uniqueness is denied ; far from it ; but the lowliness of our earthly origins is being made so much of that some of our preceptors are in danger of ignoring facts of far more importance to our well-being. The recent address of Sir Arthur Keith

from the Presidential chair of the British Association is an instance to the point, but, perhaps not unnaturally, it has excited less questioning in the minds of many Christian people than the sermon of the Bishop of Birmingham in Westminster Abbey last Sunday.

Judging by my own experience during the past week there seem to be not a few worshippers in our churches who are perturbed by the suggestion—made neither by Dr. Barnes nor Sir Arthur Keith—that the principle of evolution explains everything in the universe including ourselves, that no Creator is needed, that purpose and design and guiding care are all excluded by the necessities of the case, that the gospel of salvation is a delusion, and the hope of immortality but a pathetic dream.

Believe me, nothing vital is altered; things are exactly what they were before. Evolution as a theory may be true or false, or partly true and partly false, but it has told us nothing about what is intrinsically human that we did not already know, and it can reveal nothing concerning our destiny which has not been more illuminatingly manifest in Jesus Christ our Lord. Science has made amazing discoveries within the last two or three generations; it has made us aware as never before of the majesty and sublimity of the universal order; but it has left all our spiritual values unaffected. To tell us how physical bodies were evolved is to tell us nothing of the reason why or to forecast the outcome of the probation we are undergoing. The millions of miles of railway that have spread over the face of the globe, and the thousands of steamships that carry passengers and cargoes to the remotest bounds of ocean, were all made possible by a man sitting watching the rise and fall of the lid of a tea-kettle in a Glasgow kitchen about a hundred and fifty years ago. The force of the escaping steam when the water rose to boiling point suggested to him the idea of the steam engine. We see what

prodigious results have accrued therefrom. It would be quite correct to say, when you see an express train drawing out of Euston station at the beginning of a non-stop run to Carlisle, or when you watch a P. & O. liner passing down the English Channel, on the way to India, that the gigantic locomotive engine on the one hand and the machinery that works the screw propeller on the other were both evolved from a tea kettle, but that would explain very little about either of them. Far more important is it to know something of the working of the mind of the Glasgow mechanic who set the train of ideas in motion which have produced such vast developments. And so it is with the soul of man. Allow to every natural factor its full weight in making him what he is to-day; look back a few thousand years and take account of all the struggles and sufferings that have gone to the up-building of present-day civilization, all the efforts that have been put forth, all the sacrifices that have been made; even then you have explained nothing unless you ask what it was that wrought within him, impelling him onward, lifting him upward, directing his gaze to heights inaccessible and giving him ever wider and purer vision of the meaning and worth of life. You only know what man is when you view him as a child of God, a spiritual being fashioned for eternity, imperfect and still in the making, but able to an ever-increasing extent to think God's thoughts along with Him and to aspire to a partnership in God's works. This is the truth so finely expressed in Wordsworth's Prelude:

> The power, which all
> Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
> To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
> Resemblance of that glorious faculty
> That higher minds bear with them as their own.
>
> . . . . . .

Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine.

(2) *This great text is also the declaration that a far higher kind of life, a supernatural life, is offered to us in Christ than is attainable apart from Him.* What I have been saying hitherto relates to the experience of humanity in general; on the whole it is as true of the pagan as of the Christian, or might be so. It is at least true of every exercise of human faculty directed towards betterment. But now comes a truth of greater worth. We are here bidden to think of that reinforcement of all our higher nature which is called the operation of divine grace, and of the illimitably blessed prospect that it opens before us. What is it the apostle says? He prays that these spiritual children of his may be strengthened by the divine Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; that they may be rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height, know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge and be filled with all the fulness of God.

The passing up from the state of nature to the state of grace could hardly be more felicitously described. Here is a plane of experience on which science can neither help nor hinder us but whose products are the highest, the most fruitful, and the most desirable ever yet made known to our poor sinful earth-bound race. Not cleverness but faith and love are our passports thereto; and once we have that sweetest of all possessions, the presence of Christ in the believing heart, all other good comes with it.

What is the love of Christ? Ah, that we can only

know as we become conformed to it. We have not the capacity for knowing it in its fulness; it transcends all our power of knowing; it "passeth knowledge." We can stand upon a sea-beach and gaze upon the ocean outspread before us, or we can take ship and sail beyond the farthest horizon out of sight of land, but no mind can compass the vastness and volume of the ocean waters or their hidden depth. We can lift our eyes to the starry heaven above us, and be awed by its still majesty, and subdued by its benignant calm, but no mightiest lens that astronomer ever used is able to disclose to our astonished vision the glory upon glory that moves in stately pageant in the boundless spaces afar. We rejoice when the sun rises in the plenitude of his strength: he brings us life and health; but we dare not look upon him in his dazzling brightness or expose ourselves defenceless to his burning rays. Even so we can apprehend but cannot comprehend the love of Christ, and, strange as it may seem, great souls have testified that not only is our imperfect human nature unable to enter fully into the meaning of the love of Christ, but that some of its effects upon us may actually be felt as painful; we cannot bear them till the fire of that love has purged away our dross and assimilated us to itself. As in Charles Wesley's beautiful hymn:

> Stronger His love than death or hell,
> Its riches are unsearchable:
> The first-born sons of light
> Desire in vain its depth to see;
> They cannot prove the mystery,
> The length, and breadth and height.
>
> God only knows the love of God;
> Oh that that love were shed abroad
> In my poor stony heart.
> For love I sigh, for love I pine;
> When shall that blessed love be mine,
> Be mine that better part?

It becomes ours as we yield ourselves to its embrace, keeping nothing back. This involves an act of faith, the greatest that any soul can make, for it means the offering of ourselves and all we have and are for that one supreme possession. This is salvation, and we cannot know how much we need salvation till we behold our sinfulness in the searching light of the redeeming love of Jesus Christ. It is a love that hurts us, humbles us, breaks us, renews and rebuilds us, and fills us with a life and joy compared with which all earthly satisfaction and delight are nothing worth.

Then begins a new and higher kind of activity than that which is only of the natural man. We have, and we long to have; we have found, and we still seek. Drawn and driven by the love that passeth knowledge we press on towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; we look for the fulfilment of the promise that we might be filled with all the fulness of God.

To possess and be possessed by the love of Christ means that your own heart overflows with love to all for whom Christ died. No lesser kind of love is to be depended upon for the regeneration and uplifting of mankind, for it is able to do two seemingly opposite things, at once to annihilate self and to deepen and enlarge the inner man; the more utterly and completely we lose ourselves in Christ the more there is of us, the deeper and richer our life becomes.

I want to say something now that not everybody believes, but it is true nevertheless as the witness of history abundantly proves and our own everyday observation confirms. If the world did believe it, our most urgent problems would be solved by this time to-morrow. It is this: In the love of Christ alone is there hope for the realization of the brotherhood of man. No profession of love for our fellow-men has in it any

promise of permanency or effectiveness which springs from any other source. All love of man to man which is not inspired and energized by this higher love is apt to come to nothing if not worse. We see what a blind, all-absorbing love of the Fatherland did for Germany. We see what the intensification of nationalism, which has its noble side, is still doing to keep the world uneasy and afraid. Is the League of Nations the remedy? Yes, if the recognition of our common allegiance to Christ can manage to get the upper hand of all our sectional loyalties and affinities; otherwise no. Trade Unionism began in the desire of unprivileged toilers to draw together and make common cause; is it free from peril or always informed by a broad and generous and unselfish spirit? There is no expression of humanitarianism in the world to-day which is to be trusted if it consciously derive only from the feeling that men are brothers by nature and must stand by one another. But let me tell you what can be trusted and will in the end prevail. What can be trusted is the spirit that sends men and women to serve and suffer in the cause of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. That can be trusted to the uttermost, for self-seeking is impossible to it, and its motive power is not of earth but of heaven.

You to whom I am speaking at this moment have much to thank God for. Begin with what you owe to the love of Christ. This is the time of year when in most churches we unite to give God thanks for the kindly fruits of the earth. That is well; it is a practice which dates from a time when famine was an enemy to be feared. It is not so now; if our own harvest has not been as plentiful as we had hoped, the surplus food supplies of other lands will be brought safely to our doors. But we need to remember that all material benefits have a spiritual purpose and should be so

received and used. God's blessings are constant and manifold, and all without exception are tokens of His love to our souls. Let us not forget to praise Him for friends and home, for our place and work in life, for the ministries we are able to render and for all that we owe to one another as the instruments of God's providence. You especially in Claremont Mission owe a great debt to your leader and his devoted wife. For twenty-five years they and their helpers have done a blessed work on this spot, whose full harvest will not be gathered till we all meet in our eternal home. If I may be pardoned for recalling the personal grief they suffered in common with many of you during the war, when their two boys were taken from them by the baptism of blood, I should like to tell you what Mr. Newland said to me about it on the last occasion when I preached here. Speaking of the shattering bereavement that he and Mrs. Newland had been called upon to endure, of the falsification of their hopes for the future of those dear sons, and of the consequent deprivation of one great incentive to purposive action in life, I said: "How hard you and their mother must have found it to take up life again and go on with your life here just as before!" His answer is worth recording. It was: "The love of Christ constraineth us." "We knew," he continued, "that there was only one thing to be done, and that was to consecrate ourselves the more fully and earnestly to the service of our Saviour here, to comfort the sorrowful and afflicted like ourselves, and by our experience of His grace to draw others to Him. We had that one thing to live for, and it has proved sufficient."

Yes, it always does; and why? Because the love of Christ became known to the world through the blood of Calvary's cross. There the mystery of redeeming love was consummated and thence it flows to every bur-

dened heart. Sir Hall Caine sent me yesterday a copy of the popular edition of his famous little book, "Barbed Wire." The actual date of publication is to-morrow, but I hope I commit no misdemeanour in quoting from it to-day. It is a story founded on a dream that the distinguished author had through being familiarized with the barbed wire entanglements that surrounded one of the internment camps for German prisoners near his home in the Isle of Man during the war. He regards the barbed wire as a symbol of the cruel barriers that prejudice and hate erect between human hearts. A German prisoner and an English girl fall in love, but unhappily there is no place for them in the world of bitter antagonisms which succeeded to the fratricidal strife that was supposed to end in 1918 and has not ended yet. The poor heart-broken woman enters a church on Easter Day and hears the congregation singing:

> Jesu, lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly
> While the gathering waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high.

Sir Hall Caine appears to be aware that what Charles Wesley actually wrote was the "gathering waters," not as we usually sing the line now, "the nearer waters." Then follows the sermon, part of which is the following explanation of the sacrifice of Calvary:

> He might have avoided His death, but He did not do so. He died of His own free will. Why? Because He was confirmed in the belief that His death would save the world.
>
> Jesus died to show that nothing mattered to man but the welfare of his soul. Riches did not matter, rank did not matter, poverty did not matter. It was nothing to Jesus that He was hated and despised and friendless and homeless and alone and cast out

of the family of men. Nothing mattered to Him but love, and because He loved the world He died for it.

And that is why all suffering souls come to Him—have been coming to Him through all the two thousand years since His pilgrimage here below—will continue to come to Him as long as the world lasts! "Let me to thy bosom fly."

What gift can you offer to the Lord of love for all His goodness and His loving-kindness to you? The gift He wants is yourself, and He will be satisfied with nothing less. Give your heart to Him that He may empty it of all uncleanness and fill it with His own pure and holy being. And where He dwells is joy unspeakable and full of glory.

REMEMBRANCE DAY, 1926

Preached in Holy Trinity, Brighton

"I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."
REV. vi, 9.

IT is a notable coincidence that Armistice Day should always fall so near to the Festival of All Saints, that tenderest and most pathetic of commemorations in the calendar of the Christian Church. As to-day is the Sunday within the octave of All Saints and also the Sunday before Remembrance Day we can hardly be more suitably employed than in combining both occasions in our thoughts with the words of my text to guide us.

This beautiful passage is one of many in the Apocalypse the meaning of which is at first sight not entirely clear. But the metaphor employed is one of deep spiritual significance and much practical helpfulness once we grasp the central idea it is intended to convey. According to the best authorities the meaning appears to be as follows: Under the Old Testament dispensation to which the writer of the Apocalypse was accustomed, the great altar in the Temple at Jerusalem was the only place where sacrifice could properly be offered to God, and the blood of the slain victims was poured out at its foot; in a sense, therefore, this sacrificial life-blood might be said to lie under the altar. Using this as a figure of speech, the writer spiritualizes the act of sacrifice and includes heaven as well as earth in its consummation. The blood is the life, as the Old Testament says; and just as the blood of an earthly victim was poured out before the altar in the temple on Mount Zion, so the souls of those who had given their lives for Christ are represented as lying poured out, as it were, before the throne of God in heaven, or, more strictly speaking, under the golden

altar whence ascend the prayers of the saints. In other words those who have suffered and died in the cause and spirit of Jesus Christ are here shown as waiting for the fruition of their self-offering in both worlds, the world that now is and that which is to come, the world we can see and the world we cannot see, for the two are one.

I ought to remark, however, before passing on, that another explanation has been given of the phrase "under the altar" which has something to commend it. Years ago a book was written on the subject under the title of "The Sacred Shrine," by Professor Hirn of the University of Finland. This scholar says that from the earliest times the altar was in its Christian usage not only a place for commemorating the sacrifice of Christ, but a place rendered sacred by the presence underneath it of the relics of some saint. During the early persecutions, when the Christians of the imperial city had to meet and worship in the catacombs, their altar or, as we should say, communion table, frequently, perhaps generally, was the marble or stone slab which covered the grave of a martyr who had shed his blood for the faith. And to-day, as probably you all know, it is a rule of the Roman Church that when an altar is consecrated it must contain relics of some kind, usually the bones of some person or persons believed to have lived lives of exceptional sanctity; the presence of these relics is supposed to radiate a holy influence around the spot where they lie and to establish some sort of a rapport between the departed soul and those who worship at that particular shrine. I do not know how much there is in this theory of the meaning of the expression "under the altar," but another illustration of it occurs to me. Those of you who have visited the catacombs in Rome where so many of the bodies of early Christian martyrs lie buried will remember that a little glass phial is affixed to nearly every tomb, con-

taining a little of the blood of the martyr whose remains are deposited within. It seems not unlikely that this custom may have been present to the mind of the writer of my text and suggested an analogy to him. As holy relics rest beneath an earthly altar, so metaphorically speaking do holy souls beneath the heavenly. And as what lies under the earthly altar is held to be in some sort a sacred memorial and a link with higher things, so even more is it with the souls that rest before the throne of God in heaven; they are working still, loving still, praying still, drawing with the cords of spiritual yearning all those without whose presence in the glory land their own felicity cannot be complete.

One can plainly see how this striking image—the souls under the altar—came to suggest itself to the great seer whose words we are considering. The Church of Christ just then was passing through a period of intense affliction. Those were the days when Nero lighted his palace garden with the bodies of burning Christians, and when no more popular cry could be raised to glut the Roman mob's lust for blood than that of "The Christians to the lions!" I think it is Dr. Paterson Smyth who says that the writer of this fine passage must often have looked upon these gory scenes. He had witnessed the torture and slaughter of many devoted people who were content to suffer for their Saviour's sake. Every day devoted men and women were going cheerfully to death for a testimony to a world which was not worthy of them; and therefore it is not wonderful that the Church triumphant should be here represented as joining with the Church militant in the prayer, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

There are, then, two main ideas presented in this text. The first is that of souls waiting for their full reward, and the second is that of their continued exercise of a spiritual ministry by the influence they are able

to exert. There is a constant commerce going on between earth and heaven which death has no power to diminish much less destroy.

Take the former of these. What do you imagine our beloved dead are doing to-day in that new life into which they have entered, some in the ordinary way of nature, some by the baptism of blood in the plenitude of their youth and manly strength? Is it conceivable that they have ceased to think about us and our perplexities in the world they have left? If there is anything that we can be sure of in life it is this, that at this special time of the year when our thoughts are concentrated upon the ending of the war eight years ago and the terrible price that had to be paid for victory, those of our sons and brothers who laid down their lives to purchase it for us must be drawing near in spirit to us too; one can almost feel their presence. But as they take retrospect with us upon that terrible time which extended from July, 1914, to November, 1918, they must view it with different eyes from their new vantage ground in that state where so many illusions are shed. I do not know how far I will carry you with me—I think I do—when I venture to say with all reverence that I think they must see more clearly now what they died for. We say they died for England, and so they did, but if they did not die for a greater than England their sacrifice was vain and an unrelieved tragedy. They died for an ideal whose imperative they felt within their souls without quite understanding it, and now they know what it was: it was that eternal good which is never seen in its fulness here but is like a burning flame in every man's heart. It is possible that some of our enemies may have done the same. No one can define the undefinable, but we all know that inner imperative which demands our uttermost in the service of some cause or truth and we feel that we have

no choice but to respond or be for ever self-condemned. So undoubtedly it was with those of our blood who went forth to die for England in the Great War. England was for them a symbol of something that they could not put into words, the high thing, the ineffable reality which has claims upon us that we dare not ignore or deny. There is that within us which makes us aware that we ought, should need arise, to sacrifice everything in life and even life itself at the call of high duty ; and when we respond we somehow know in our heart of hearts that it is an eternal and not merely a temporal good in whose vindication we are engaged.

That this was so with the men who fought our battles I am perfectly sure, and this it was that made their deed sublime. Judged from any other standpoint it was not worth while. It becomes plainer and plainer as years go on that that war was a ghastly calamity fomented by human passion and to some extent promoted by wicked men. It called forth great and noble things in the ordinary men who fought for their country and fell in her service, but the war itself need never have been but for the evil engrained in human nature and finding vent through human cruelty and hate. No, no, do not let us delude ourselves. The world would have been better without that war, and it has had many harmful consequences which will outlast the lifetime of the youngest of us. In saying this do not imagine me to be implying that our country was to blame for entering it. I do not say that ; I do not see what else we could do ; I am only saying that, wherever the guilt of having engendered that awful horror chiefly lies, the ten million of all the belligerent nations whose lives were prematurely torn from them on the battlefield must now be seeing it for what it was, an outbreak of hell in God's fair world.

And if those who died to make the world a better

place to live in for the survivors could tell us what they think about the material results, what would they say? Oh, the irony of it all. It is a poorer, harder England that we live in now, an England in which the class war is proceeding with an obstinacy and rancour unprecedented, an England that exhibits few signs of that moral regeneration that was so confidently foretold in the first months of that magnificent uprising of our national manhood which followed upon Germany's challenge to the liberties of mankind. Militarism is not crushed; international rivalries are more dangerous than ever; and the world safe for democracy is farther from realization than it was a dozen years ago. It is not democracy that we have in Russia any more than in Italy or Spain; and even where it prevails it is no shining success. After all we in this dear land of ours have more to be thankful for than most other nations.

I am but facing facts in saying these things. Was, then, the sacrifice of our bravest and best in the holocaust of the war utterly wasted? Far from it, and they know that now. They know that their fidelity to what was for them the call of duty was a spiritual thing with spiritual effects which have not yet fully worked themselves out. They are waiting, waiting for us to do our part, to rise to the full height of the moral responsibility that has been thrust upon us. More than that, they are waiting till the grand ingathering takes place, till the full harvest of the sowing of Christ has been reaped, and sin and death are known no more.

That is one thing. The second thought suggested here is this. It should be some comfort and help to us to realize that there is no breach of sympathy and aim between us and those beloved ones whom we call dead, but who are more alive than we are. Protestants have never made enough of the doctrine of the communion of saints. We add immensely to the sorrow of bereave-

ment by the way in which we cleave a gulf between the hither and the yonder and speak of the departed as though they were separated from us by an absolute dividing line over which thought and love could never pass. I am sure this is wrong; the plane of the spirit is that of unity; it is the plane of the flesh which is that of division; and love is the language of spirit. Can you really imagine it possible that those who have loved you here, and from whose noble influence and example you have derived invaluable help and inspiration, cease to care what becomes of you when they quit the frail tenement of the flesh? Most certainly not; the universe is not made in sealed compartments, nor does a personality revolutionize all its interests when it passes from one room to another in the Father's house. If the solicitude and unselfish care of an earthly friend have ever been of use to you; if his thoughts and prayers have ever served to lift you higher in the spiritual life; if his presence has been a constant force operative on the side of good for you; if even the consciousness that there was such a presence somewhere in this world thinking about you, feeling with you, and earnestly desiring the best for you, was in itself a strength in hours of weakness or dismay, can you really suppose it will be less so when the veil of the flesh is removed? Never. And if Christ makes use of incarnate souls as a means of access to those who need Him here, as we know He does, we may be perfectly sure that He makes still more use of the discarnate. Oh, beyond all doubt the souls under the altar in heaven are as potent in their helpfulness, through the love they bear us and their nearness to God, as ever they were on earth. You remember how in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" the knights of the Round Table are said to have received their vision of the Holy Grail, Gathered in King Arthur's hall:

All at once, as there we sat, we heard
A crackling and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it passed.
And every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory.

It is a beautiful legend and teaches a great truth. The mystic chalice which holds the blood of Christ, the wine of everlasting life, comes to a sinful world most plainly along the line of glorious light that streams from holy souls above. The souls under the altar are an ever-increasing band binding earth and heaven in a fellowship of love and prayer. Yes, far more than we know, perhaps far more than we dream, the souls under the altar are breaking through the barriers of the flesh by the power of sanctified desire and uniting in one bond of fellowship those whom Christ is drawing upward and homeward to the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

The final observation I have to make is this: Among those souls under the altar you may be yourself included even now, for the spiritual altar is in both worlds. How many there are in this sad world who have made the full dedication of themselves to the will of God, accepted the cross, surrendered all prospect of the attainment of their heart's desire on earth, and done it in obedience to the command of Christ, we cannot know. God alone knows that. But every such oblation is in itself a ministry. Have you never been in the presence of persons who you instinctively feel are wise with a wisdom not of this world, a wisdom born of much sorrow and a deliberate yielding up of all straining after earthly good and personal success? When this kind of experience is allied to a true spirit

of love and compassion for the needs of others, and dwells as it were under the very shadow of Christ, it sheds a radiance, an aroma of blessing, everywhere around it. Those who possess it on earth are of the blessed assembly of the souls who wait under the altar for the glad fulfilment of their highest yearnings, but who while they wait are, by being what they are, a potent influence for good in a world of sin and woe, a ray of light along which steals the Holy Grail for the refreshment of needy souls thirsting for communion with God. It may be that some of you are just being called into this high service and as yet have scarcely realized its nature. You have had to give up much in the course of your life; one hope after another has been frustrated, your aims have been baffled, your most cherished earthly possessions taken away. Sometimes you wonder what good your life is now; it is obscure, uninfluential, comparatively insignificant. You have been crucified with Christ, but you dare not claim—in fact cannot realize—that the world is any better for it. Sometimes you pray, "How long, O Lord, how long?" and it is no ignoble prayer. You are patiently waiting, waiting for God's fuller day. Wait on, friend and follower of the risen Lord. What you wait for will surely come to you with a fulness surpassing earthly imagination to conceive. You are a soul under the altar on which Christ is being offered for the life of the world. But while you are waiting let your soul go on working. Live so near to the eternal heart of love, be so filled with the spirit of Christ, let your whole being become so saturated with His presence that, perhaps without your saying or doing anything specially conspicuous, you may be a potent medium of the redeeming grace of God. And the white robe of holiness shall be yours long ere you attain to highest heaven.

THE ADVENT SUMMONS

Preached in Westminster Abbey, Sunday, November 28th, 1926

> "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."
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> ROMANS xiii, 11, 12.

THE generally accepted view of the meaning of this fine passage is that it relates directly to the second coming of Christ and I have no doubt that in the main this is correct.

The writer of my text, in common with all his fellow Christians of nineteen centuries ago, believed that the triumphal return of Christ was near at hand, might probably indeed take place within his own lifetime, and therefore he exhorted his readers to remain intently on the watch for it. But a study of the context shows that in the words before us the apostle was not dwelling so much upon the thought that Christ might appear again at any moment as upon the thought that His previous coming had been of such wondrous benefit to mankind that the Church should ever be seeking to give fuller expression to the new and higher mode of life thus divinely revealed.

The composite metaphor which constitutes my text bears out this view, for it takes for granted that a moral warfare is proceeding in which every follower of Christ is called to engage. The phraseology is suggested by St. Paul's acquaintance with Roman military usage. Through having been a prisoner in the hands of Roman soldiers he knew intimately what the routine of their discipline was and, as he elsewhere shows, he

was familiar with their equipment in detail. He must often have watched the process of changing guard in the early hours of the morning, and it is to this that he alludes here.

"It is high time to awake out of sleep"—that is, the bugle has just sounded and the drowsy men are turning out to take their first spell of duty for the day.

"The night is far spent"—that is, dawn is breaking, the sun is rising, a new day is beginning.

"Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light"—that is to say (still keeping to the imagery of the barrack room), the occupations of the hours of night, whether sleeping or carousing, must not hold us longer; we must arm ourselves and go forth, ready and prepared for what may be required of us in this new day. The parenthetic statement, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," relates specifically to what all the apostolic Church expected to follow upon the Saviour's glorious second advent. The word "salvation" is used in its most comprehensive sense. It means the final deliverance of God's people from all the evils that beset them in this world: it signifies the complete vindication of the moral order, the victorious establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, with all that that spiritual consummation implies. The readers of the exhortation are warned that there is still stern work before them. There must be no slothfulness on their part, no indifference to the issues involved. Believing that the night of sorrow and sin is drawing to a close they are to have done with the works of darkness—that is, the practices pertaining to the heathenism and unfaith of the age; and some of those practices were very gross—and to clothe themselves in the panoply of the gospel as true soldiers of Christ in the campaign against every form of evil.

How, then, do we stand with reference to this counsel given to people of a day long gone by and belonging to a world order so different from our own? One great civilization has perished and another risen upon its ruins since these words were first penned, but the truth they contain has lost none of its force; it is as applicable to human life to-day as it was in the apostolic age. Let me remark here that although the expectation of Christ's second coming is not as intense with us as it was with the original followers of the risen Lord, it must not be allowed to fall into the background of our thoughts. We cannot afford to give it up, and I will show you why.

First, there is nothing in the New Testament and nothing in our knowledge of history to encourage the view that this world is ever likely to become by means of enlightened human effort an ideal dwelling-place for human beings. For the last few generations we have been talking as though it could; we have been hearing much about progress, the rapid extension of man's power over nature, with the concurrent amelioration of the conditions of our life in the flesh; we had also persuaded ourselves that in time almost every cause of human misery could be eliminated by the joint endeavours of science and statesmanship. But this too facile optimism has received a check of late years; we have been sadly disillusioned; we know now whither this gospel tends and how little it is to be relied upon. I repeat that there is no likelihood whatever of this material world of ours ever regenerating itself or developing gradually into a happy and satisfactory abode for immortal spirits.

Secondly, experience does not tend to show that men are necessarily made good by improving the outside of life. There is greater capacity for wealth production in the modern world than the ancients ever dreamed of,

but men are as selfish as ever in their manner of using it and as ruthless in their material rivalries. Nay, more, we have reached a point at which it must be honestly confessed that we have succeeded in acquiring a greater mastery of natural forces than we are morally fit to be entrusted with, and no greater danger threatens our civilization. Discovery follows discovery, invention treads on the heels of invention, one amazing development gives rise to another ; we know not what astounding feat will be announced next. Some of us of late have been listening to voices speaking from continent to continent across the Atlantic ocean, and a succession of greater wonders is promised us on the same line. Some chemist or other will by and by succeed in exploding the atom, and what then ? Then there will be energy enough and to spare at the control of the mind and will of self-sufficient man ; will it make him happy, generous, and kind ? There is no such prospect ; it may but provide him with greater facilities for inflicting miseries upon his brother man. No, there needs something more if salvation in any true sense of the word is to be attained by mankind. There needs divine intervention to make us what we ought to be ; it is human nature that needs to be re-made, not the faculties we have at command.

Thirdly, everybody knows that in the long run a term must be put to the mundane order and all its contents ; it will not go on for ever. The day must come when, as the Bible assures us and science affirms, this old earth will have run its course and passed away, and the human race along with it ; and, whatever be the mode of that passing, we cannot fail to be concerned with what lies beyond. Individually we are passing now ; in a very few years not a single person to whom these words are addressed will be left on earth. But we shall not have done with life ; that goes on,

and the question of questions that we have to face is what we are making of life and how.

The answer to this question is that faith in Christ implies aiming at a new quality of life and in a new power. What came to the world in Jesus of Nazareth nearly two thousand years ago has to be worked out in ourselves and expressed in all our relationships. We are bidden to rouse ourselves from the sleep of indifferentism, carelessness, disloyalty to our higher vision, worldliness of thought and aim. We live in a time of darkness, when idealism has hidden its face from the majority of mankind; we look out upon a world in tears; the night about us is filled with the whispering shapes of unbelief and fear. We know not how or when God will intervene to deliver us from our present bondage, but we know that He will do so, for this is His world, and He cannot forsake it; our salvation may be nearer than we think, and no follower of Christ should be so faithless as to cease to look and labour for it. The truth is always other than merely what appearances proclaim; Christ is always coming in the hearts and lives of men. He cannot be stayed, and He shall yet be manifest—perhaps more speedily and overwhelmingly than most of us dare to hope—in an invincible uprising of the latent good that slumbers in the human soul, sweeping away before it the nightmare of universal dread, and bearing on its wings to the uttermost corners of the earth a new and joyous confidence in the reign of universal fraternity and goodwill. If we believe this we must act on it. Not even omnipotence can deliver us from our ills in spite of ourselves. Spiritual ends are attained by spiritual means, and the one force that can save and lift humanity is the Spirit of Christ operating through the consecrated wills of the men and women who really believe in Him and are prepared to dare everything for His sake.

There is one special task to which, it seems to me, the Church of Christ is urgently called at the present time. It is that of moralizing the group mind. The great German thinker, Troeltsch, who died not long ago, stated in one of his last lectures—delivered, I think, in London—that an imperative work of the immediate future, if civilization is to be saved and spiritualized, must be that of overcoming the selfishness of the group, a selfishness as potent for mischief in its way as the selfishness of the individual though seldom perceived to be such. We have had a grievous example of it in the Coal Strike which is now coming to an unsatisfactory end. Here were two important sections of the community, coal owners and coal miners, locked in a deadly grapple for six months or more without approach to a reasonable accommodation. The injury done to the whole country was prodigious; they knew it; everybody knew it; yet the struggle went on. There were sensible men on both sides; the facts of the case were perfectly well known; why could not those men have met around a table six months ago and adjusted their differences? The answer is entirely plain: It was because of the unreasoning selfishness of the group mind. It is because of this that British trade has had to suffer, at a time when it could least afford it, a loss of perhaps three hundred million pounds and the forfeiture of markets that we may never recover.

Again, what is the cause of the dangerous friction between France and Italy at the present moment or the occasional outbreaks of spiteful recrimination between our big American creditor and her various European debtors? Simply the mischievous operation of the group mind in international affairs. It is this more than anything else that engenders wars. Suspicion, prejudice, and hate are products of the group mind that must somehow be got rid of or in time they

will plunge us into a greater calamity than the dreadful holocaust from whose effects we are slowly and painfully emerging. It is well known that men in the mass will do wicked things that the individual units composing it will not do. We shall have to master and train the herd-instinct so that it shall become something worthier than a mere co-operation of material interests; we must purify and ennoble the group consciousness, whether that of the nation or that of the class; and this will be a very difficult thing to do because the group consciousness is so largely sub-rational.

Moreover, we cannot call upon the group mind for sacrifice and renunciation in the same way as we can make appeal to the individual conscience. You can tell an ordinary man that self-sacrifice and self-renunciation may not only be his duty in certain eventualities but tend to his own spiritual gain. You cannot say that with equal force to the group-mind. You cannot tell England as England that by losing her life she will find it or that she must die to herself in order to live more gloriously in the common life of mankind. But what you can do is this: You can tell England that as a nation she is divinely called upon to seek moral purity and moral dignity in all her internal and external relations; you can train the sons and daughters of England to think of their country as occupying an indispensable place in the world, not primarily as an imperial power, but as the minister of a new internationalism that has more of blessed promise in it than the old. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." What is bad in the motives and acts of a private citizen cannot be good when done by the State. What is inspired by base self-interest in our private conduct cannot be made worthy because done in the name of the Empire. What we would not stoop to do in the case of our next-door

neighbour becomes no more reputable because done by the community as a whole and to another people. Once see this clearly and it will make all the difference in the relations of one class with another or one people with another. Our Christianity requires of us as part of our individual duty that we should seek by every means in our power to create in our family life, our industrial life, and our national life the same pure and wholesome standard of feeling and action, the same spirit, that we regard as obligatory between man and man.

One closing word. There are dark hours in every individual life when all that once was bright and blessed in our experience seems to us to have perished for ever without hope of resurrection. There are seasons when one loses hold on life, as it were, and envisages it as bereft of comfort, meaning, and value; you wonder that you ever thought otherwise. Looking back upon earlier and happier days you smile sadly to yourself to think how greatly you were deceived in the promise of the days to come; you little knew the trials and mortifications that awaited you, the glooms and terrors through which you would be called to pass. John Bunyan knew what he was talking about when he placed the Valley of the Shadow of Death after the Valley of Humiliation, for the one does commonly succeed to the other; it is when we are brought low and have our hardest battles to fight against the enemy within ourselves, the temptation to let go our grip on the great essentials of right living, that the hobgoblins of the night begin to gather round our path and we can neither fight nor fly. Bunyan's Pilgrim did not know the sound of his own voice—a most suggestive touch that, so true to life. Which self is it that we are listening to when we preach despair to ourselves in the black moments that blot out the memories of past joys;

is it our best self or our worst? I will venture to say that nine times out of ten when a man has lost touch with high and holy things, when the light of heaven has ceased to shine in his heart, it is his baser nature that is dictating his thoughts; the voice that is speaking is not his real voice, not the voice of his finer manhood, though it deceive him into thinking that it is his final judgment upon life; it is a whisper from the pit of hell.

Listen then to this word of authority: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The danger is not what you think it is; it is not that you may continue in darkness for ever, but that you may prove unfaithful to the call of the morning. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." The worst part of any dark experience is the feeling that it will never end; you do not see how you are ever to come out of it or how life can ever be glad again. But this is sheer delusion; it is not the will of God that any soul should abide in the prison cell of sorrow and sin, and the two are more often found in conjunction than is commonly supposed. "Unto you that fear my name, saith the Lord, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Every day is a new advent of Christ, every morning the refreshing beams of His love shine anew upon our waking eyes. Rise up to meet Him; shake off the deadly deceits which accompany loss of vision; put on the whole armour of God, and go forth into the light.

FRATERNITY IN CHRIST

Preached before the Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales—the Colonial Missionary Sermon—in the City Temple, July 5th, 1925.

"One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."
MATTHEW xxiii, 8.

IT has been suggested by some competent critics of the gospel sources that this passage in the form in which it now appears is less likely to be an authentic saying of our Lord Himself than the realized and explicit experience of the apostolic church: or at least, if it proceeded from the Master's own lips, that a gloss has been placed upon the record by the evangelist or by a later hand. The original from this point of view would be an appropriate sequel to the injunction of which the context chiefly consists against ostentation and the desire for personal prominence, particularly in relation to spiritual things. The subsequent and amplified form of the saying would thus include a reference to the supremacy of Christ which would seem quite natural to worshippers of the risen and glorified Lord but not obviously so while the Saviour was still in the flesh and His Messiahship unconfessed to the world. "Be not ye called Rabbi. . . . Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ."

The view thus stated might readily be accepted without detriment to the spiritual value and authority of the declaration contained in the text exactly as it stands. Christ is represented as the speaker; but the force of the utterance is not in the least diminished

if we read it rather as the expression of Christian faith and practice in relation to Christ on the one hand and the general body of believers on the other; there is nothing gained or lost on either hypothesis. We do hear the voice of our Master in these words; but we also hear that of the body He indwells and of every member thereof. The meaning of this entire piece of teaching is plain. Those who would learn of Jesus are to be meek and lowly in heart as He was; they are not to seek appellations that serve to mark them off as in any way superior to their fellow Christians, but to look upon one another as all equally precious in the sight of God. In this respect the new Israel is to be careful not to copy the old. The sacred name of Abba belongs specially to Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named": let no man assume it as indicating a right to lordship over God's heritage. The little flock that now witnesses Christ to mankind has but one Master—literally, one teacher—one example, one revelation of right living—the incarnate Word Himself; and in fellowship with Christ, no longer after the flesh, all are brethren, members one of another in virtue of belonging to the mystical body of which He is the ever-living head.

Our subject then falls naturally into two main divisions:

(1) Christ is the expression of absolute moral value in terms of human life.

(2) It is through our common allegiance to Him that our fraternal relationship to one another becomes realizable.

Concerning the former of these propositions I would remark that there is nothing more important either to our individual or our common life to-day than a clear conception of moral value, what is authoritative and what is not; and on this issue unfortunately much

confusion of thought and practice exists. It is no straining of the truth to say that nearly all our troubles, social, political, international, in recent years have sprung from this confusion. In a manner of speaking it produced the Great War, and it is at the bottom of most of our perplexities since the restoration of what has proved to be but an uneasy and doubtful peace. If the nations do not understand each other's minds, is it not because their standards of value are in some degree different? The observation is occasionally made that we in this country do not adequately understand German mentality even now—the way our late enemies look on life, the way they view their responsibility for the state of things that now exists or the obligation that rests upon them to fulfil their undertakings. No more do we manage to grasp the standpoint and enter into the purposes of our late allies the people of France; and he would be a bold man who would dare to affirm with assurance that we know exactly what Russians are thinking and why. In a lesser degree the same statement applies to our domestic problems. In the last analysis economic problems are spiritual problems and are intimately related to and only to be finally solved by a proper apprehension of moral values.

If we do not rightly understand each other it is because our vision of what constitutes absolute value is so far defective. Before the War there were German thinkers who attacked the Christian standard as an insufficient and even misleading guide of life; and there are those in the English-speaking world to-day who express a similar distrust of the sufficiency of the Christian gospel as a remedy for all our ills. I suppose there is no higher authority in his own field than Dr. William McDougall of Harvard, who in his book, "Ethics and Some World Problems," frankly states

that Christianity needs to be supplemented by something else if civilization is to survive, and quotes Friedrich Naumann as saying, "Not our entire morality is rooted in the Gospel, but only a part of it, although an extremely important and easily despised constituent. Beside the Gospel there are demands of power and of right, without which society cannot exist." It seems to me that in this and kindred utterances Professor McDougall and those who think with him interpret Christianity in a way that the New Testament does not, but it is not my business to criticize them here; I merely state the fact that the utmost confusion prevails in the modern world as to what absolute moral value actually is or whether such a thing exists at all, and there is no more urgent need of our time than that of arriving at a clear unequivocal judgment on the matter.

Let me ask you a plain question at this point. Do we imagine and invent the highest things we live by or are they communicated to us? I should like to put that question to every leader of thought and action in the world to-day. I should like the spokesmen of international Communism, for instance, to tell us where they think they got their ideals ~~from~~ and what sanction they have behind them, but I fear we already know the answer, and it is an answer not confined to communists. Here is an example of its operation which we all remember. The present Prime Minister delivered two speeches some little time ago which made a great impression. The former of these took the House of Commons by surprise and did what a speech does not often accomplish in that assembly, it influenced votes and compelled by general consent a change of policy. It was an appeal for industrial co-operation and mutual trust between the representatives of Capital and Labour in an age of rapidly proceeding industrial and economic change. The second speech was delivered to the

National Free Church Council at Leeds. It was a pronouncement in which Mr. Baldwin avowed his conviction that only in the atmosphere of a true religious idealism could our many urgent and dangerous national and international problems be solved. *The Times* on the one hand and the President of the Free Church Council on the other commended this utterance, not only because of its evident sincerity, but because of its truth. But how were these speeches received in other quarters? Representatives of the extreme left in the ranks of Labour described the Prime Minister's appeal for fraternity as "hot air" and went on to justify the use of violence as a means of righting the wrongs of the poor. In the opposite political camp certain capitalist journals accused Mr. Baldwin of sentimentalism and of possessing an inadequate sense of realities. Yet surely there never was an act of more practical statesmanship than the declaration of principle made in those two speeches and never were words spoken more faithfully attested by the verdict of history. Either we have an absolute rule of life revealed to us in Christ or we have not; either it is sufficient for all our needs or it is not; either it is an end in itself, a good that transcends all merely utilitarian considerations, or it is not; either it is eternally real, carrying its own imperative within it, or it is not. We know what the answer of the loftiest Christian character, the finest known to man, has ever been to this challenge: "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." The Christ-informed conscience is the guide of life. It is true that as our spiritual vision clears we see more and more in Him; it is true that we learn by obedience thereto; it is true that the riches of Christ are unsearchable—that is, unfathomable—but it is also true, thanks be to God,

that He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. In Him we have touched reality, absolute value, the good which has no beyond. "One is your Master, even Christ." It is indefeasible Christian testimony that is summed up in the line from Charles Wesley's hymn which was inscribed on the coffin of Hugh Price Hughes

Thou, O Christ, art all I want.

Turn now to our second division. It is only in virtue of our recognition of the absolute moral value revealed in Christ that human brotherhood becomes an attainable ideal. Perhaps the greatest delusion of our time is the belief that fraternity as an ideal can either be reached or sustained without reference to an absolute standard of good. It has often been tried and always failed yet we go on repeating the same mistake. There never was a time when there was more talk of the duty of exhibiting a fraternal spirit in human relations than now, and there never was a time when its implications were more glaringly disregarded. Why is this? It is that for the most part we are basing our conceptions of brotherhood on the supposed temporal interests of humanity and not on our individual responsibility to God; we have an idealism which is purely mundane, which looks no farther for its sanctions than the necessities of physical existence, which takes no account of supernatural imperatives, and the result is what has been seen a hundred times before. The attempt is being made to cultivate the sentiments of mutual helpfulness and good-will apart altogether from the consideration of the spiritual meaning of life itself or whether it has a meaning. Men can and do proclaim fraternity to-day—in politics, in the press, in fiction and the drama, even in the pulpit—without any suggestion that fraternity as an end in itself, a good to be

sought without reference to anything higher, is quite futile ; it always ends in disillusionment.

We do not need to look far for examples of this. There is no devilry anywhere that can excel the devilry of democracy when its gaze is fixed upon itself alone. The French Revolution began with the slogan : Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. It dethroned religion and would have nothing to say to other than purely naturalistic and utilitarian standards of obligation. It soon produced the Reign of Terror and culminated in a military despotism which attempted to bring the entire human race under its yoke. The Bolsheviks address each other and the workers of the world as brothers. "By their fruits ye shall know them." We are repeatedly told that all that is wrong with the world to-day, economically or otherwise, is that the spirit of brotherhood is lacking. Exactly ; but the profession of it is not lacking ; what is lacking is the only thing which will make it effective. It is only in the recognition of a good that is not merely empirical and to our temporal advantage, but absolute and eternal, that we can ever hope to live in right relations with one another in this or any other world. People seem strangely unwilling to believe this or even to see it, and the results of our unfaith are calamitous. One of the characteristic products of the present age is our tendency to transfer the battle-ground of good and evil from the individual conscience to our mass relationships. It is a mournful blunder, all the more so because so earnestly advocated by well-meaning men. Begin with what you individually owe to God, with what you are in the sight of God, with the urgent necessity of getting into right relations with God, and so surely as you do so will your duty to your fellow-man become clear. But the other way round, as the past has demonstrated a thousand times, lies lust and cruelty and every kind of abomination.

There is an absolute and eternal good to which we are individually summoned to conform our lives, whether anyone else in the wide world is doing so or not, and if we fail to respond to that summons there is no hope of permanent betterment for humanity as a whole. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

No one, I imagine, would be likely to call in question the great service that the Bishop of Manchester is rendering to the cause of applied Christianity. Perhaps more than any man it is he who has promoted the movement for formulating and expressing the mind of the Church of God on the moral problems that lie at the root of our present-day entanglements in the respective spheres of politics, economics, and citizenship. Yet in his book *Christus Veritas* Bishop Temple tells us that "Mainly our progress (in these directions) is . . . agreement not to inflict or suffer injuries; it is the substitution of enlightened selfishness for stupid selfishness. Of any emancipation from selfishness itself, or any attainment of perfect fellowship in self-surrender to the absolute good, our historic progress hitherto gives no promise whatsoever." But he finely adds on the other hand: "The deepest experience of the Christian is no 'flight of the alone to the alone,' but a union in God, now known as Love, with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven. The religious soul finds God within itself in all ages. But when God is revealed as Love, this can no longer be a solitary experience; it becomes an incorporation into the fellowship of all those whom God loves and who in answer are beginning to love Him."

It is from this basis that all our efforts for the upbuilding of a new humanity must proceed if the result is to endure. It is the fundamental reason for the

existence of the society whose activities we dedicate to God in our worship to-day. There is a form of Christian culture genuinely characteristic of the Britannic nations; we have a common spiritual background; our ideals of truth, justice and right in private life and civic relations derive from a common source. I take the liberty of affirming that I believe this common spiritual inheritance, this special grouping of moral values, which in some degree distinguishes the race to which we belong from all the other races of mankind is not confined to those who inherit the Puritan tradition, potent and fecund though that tradition be; we may thankfully rejoice that it is a fact in which we all partake and realize ourselves as one. This is a thing worth thinking about. I say that British Christianity and the type of character it has made, north of the Tweed or south of it, whether in religion as by law established or in free and voluntary associations, whether at home in this ancient land or amongst our kinsmen beyond the seas, is a recognizable reality of incalculable worth to the future of civilization. There is a sense in which, despite all our denominational differences, men born and trained under the influence of fifteen hundred years of Christian witness and fellowship in this country are nearer to each other and understand each other better than any other race and any other traditions, Christian or heathen, understands us or we them. Now is this a possession worth conserving and perpetuating? Assuredly it is. If we are to serve and bless mankind we must first make sure that wherever the influence of the British name extends, that which is distinctively ours through the faith of our fathers shall be passed on enriched and intensified to our sons. But if we are to succeed in this aim and mission we must get back to the fountain head whence our fathers derived their chiefest inspiration.

We must begin again with Christ, with personal knowledge of Christ, personal dependence upon Christ, personal experience of the redeeming love of God in Christ. One is our Master, even Christ, but we must love and serve Him singly and intimately if we are to draw together effectively for any great and worthy end. That the world is full of sorrow and injustice calling urgently for relief does not dispense me from the necessity of being cleansed from my iniquities and obtaining a heart void of offence before God ere I can truly take my place with those who are seeking to hasten the advent of His kingdom among men. In coming to Christ we are uniting ourselves with the fellowship of just men made perfect; it is thus that they become perfect. We find ourselves in losing ourselves, not primarily in the service of our common humanity, but in Him who is the source of all its good. The time is short, and we shall soon pass on to join that ever-growing company of emancipated souls whose work is no longer amid these broken lights of earth, but in God's ampler spaces and under heaven's shining sky. Wondrously near to us even now is that spiritual state wherein nothing false can live and wherein all that we can rejoice over is what we contribute to and receive from the common life of the redeemed in Christ. We have no other gains; our earthly probation has no other meaning; and we have never won anything for ourselves which has not in virtue of that very fact forthwith become part of the spiritual inheritance of the multitude which no man can number assembled in glory before the throne of God.

THE SACRAMENT OF LOVE

Preached in Westminster Abbey on June 19, 1927
(Hospital Sunday)

"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

1 JOHN iv, 20.

JESUS said: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In this great dual saying, cited from the Jewish law, our Lord evidently assents to the view that the first of all human duties is that of loving God; that of loving man is emphatically subordinated to it. How comes it, then, that my text puts, or seems to put, matters the other way round? This writer tells us that unless we are sincere in our love of one another it is of no use professing to love God; and he enforces his argument by declaring in effect that love of God has to be learned from love of man, and that it is not such a very easy matter to love a being one has never seen; one can only ascend through the experience of human fellowship to the apprehension of a still higher—namely, fellowship with the divine and eternal. He is unquestionably right, though there comes a point beyond which all analogies break down in the effort to illustrate or explain the relations of the soul with God. Nor is there any discrepancy between his opinion and that of Jesus on the subject, as we shall see as we proceed. Love of God can never rightly be separated from love of man, however far the one may transcend the other and ought so to do. He who is incapable of the lower love, or poor and shallow in the amount of it he evinces, is *ipso facto*

incapable of the higher, or false and unreal in his assertion of it. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." Hate or indifference to the needs of man, cruelty in one's treatment of one's fellows, in quite incompatible with love to God, though, as we know to our shame, it has often been found consistent with a certain degree of religious sentiment. Some of the most devilish things in history have been done by people who at the same time have professed to be actuated by great devotion to the Most High. According to my text such a claim is a delusion. He that truly loves God must perforce be a lover of his kind likewise; the one fact implies the other, and the lesser necessarily precedes the greater in order of time and development of soul. I wish to dwell for a few moments on the question thus opened up.

Throughout all the Christian centuries as well as in the best period of the Old Testament religion which was the seed soil out of which that of Jesus sprang, the greatest stress has been laid on the gladness, combined with the duty and privilege, of putting love to God before everything else. Every Church exhorts its members to do this. We have been repeatedly warned by persons wise in the things of the Spirit, the great ones of the heavenly kingdom in every generation, not to suffer our affection for the creature to hinder that which is due from us to the Creator. Again and again we read in the lives of great saints that they have had to make their choice between the two kinds of love, and have deliberately forgone the delights of human fellowship rather than allow anything to compete ever so slightly with their all-absorbing loyalty to their Maker. They have held somewhat aloof from their fellow-creatures even when serving them best, have refrained from giving themselves whole-heartedly in any association of soul with soul, have remained more or less

detached from all human concerns. The typical mediæval saint would never have sorrowed greatly over the death of a loved one, and would have been absolutely incapable—recoiled from the very thought—of becoming so identified with the life of friend or lover as to have almost no existence apart. And yet, as you know, some of the sweetest and most touching things ever said or written, and some of the noblest and most heroic ever done, have been inspired directly by the fidelity and devotion of one human being to another. One would not like to cut this out of our collective experience, and the world would be very much the poorer if we could. How strange then that it should ever have been felt to be inconsistent with the highest reaches of our intercourse with God, and yet apparently it has. Beware of robbing God by loving the creature; beware of attaching yourself too strongly to any human soul—son or daughter, father or mother, husband or wife, lover or friend—for if you do you will be incapable of scaling the highest heights of fellowship with God. Such are the monitions addressed to us by those austere, lonely spirits who dwell amid the rigours and grandeurs of a religious experience inaccessible to all but a few.

Sometimes the same injunction is applied in lesser ways. Only the other day I heard of a letter sent by a well-meaning Job's comforter to a bereaved acquaintance telling him that he had probably idolized his little boy too much and that therefore God had taken him away because He would not endure a rival; the letter continued with a dissertation on the folly and sin of loving anything passionately except God. To be guilty of this, declared the would-be adviser in question, is to belittle and devitalize the soul and to keep oneself in bondage which must be broken before it is possible to enter upon fulness of eternal joy. If this be true, then, apparently, all intense human affection is a mistake,

and the best we ought ever to permit ourselves to give to any earthly being should be a tepid regard, a moderate good-will, which leaves us independent of all change and loss. We shall not break our hearts when anything comes to put an end to the relationship, for we have never given them ; all the ardour of which we are capable in this way is to be bestowed upon loving God and God alone. Nothing but God, nothing but God !

I hope you see what I am trying to do. I am trying to point a contrast; the contrast between a certain religious ideal and the warmth and sweetness of ordinary human affection. Is the devotee right who renounces the latter for the former, or is afraid of letting himself go in the indulgence of a purely human love for fear it should come between him and his Maker ? Take St. Bernard of Clairvaux, feeling himself called to withdraw from all family relationships and to expose his feeble constitution to the severest hardships as a member of a monastic community dwelling in the wilderness far from all other human habitations. He did this, he said, because he loved God and would have no other particular love in his life ; henceforth father, mother, and brothers would be to him no more and no less than any other human beings ; he would love all mankind as with the love of Christ and in no other way. Few people nowadays seem to know Bernard's letters. They are very remarkable compositions and give us a better insight into his character than his theological works. In one of these addressed to a friend he says : " To love God is to love charity, and therefore it is to labour for charity, to strive to love and be loved for the sake of God, which alone is worthy of our zeal in the service of man." This passage can be paralleled by many more to the same effect. Take St. Francis of Assisi cutting himself off from the society of a pious mother, and disappointing an affectionate father,

because he felt he must fulfil to the letter the command to forsake everything for Christ ; he could not conceive it possible to do this in its fullness while he continued to allow his heart to be swayed by natural affection for this person or that. More than once he appeared to have been touched by a pitiful longing for the society of wife or child, but put it firmly away from him as a temptation of the devil. Or take St. Clare, leaving her home clandestinely and in the night because of the opposition offered by her parents to her desire to enter a cloister, and listen to the answer she returned to their pleading : " Did not our Saviour say that He had no mother or brethren save those who would hear the word of God and do it ? even so for His dear sake I have rooted all natural love out of my heart, and care no more for you who have brought me into this world than I do for others who live in the world even as you ; I love all souls equally for Jesus' sake, but henceforth I have no mother, brethren, or sisters save those who like myself desire God only."

Professor Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, tells of a father whose fitness for religious vocation and sincerity in accepting it were tested by having his little son clothed in rags, starved and beaten daily before his eyes. When he could bear all this without wincing, and solemnly declare his natural love for the child to be dead he was said to have glorified God and to be worthy of His service. The same authority tells of a so-called saint, the only son of his parents, whose dying mother sought for a last interview with him and remained outside the monastery door all night knocking and pleading for admission or for but one word of comfort or one glimpse of the face of her dearly beloved. She received no response ; the saint was dead to the world, he said ; he had nothing to do with one human being more than another ; he loved all alike and none in particular. And,

the monkish chronicler adds for the benefit of his readers, the mother died unheeded on the doorstep, and when the saint went forth the next morning he passed unconcerned over her body, piously commending to heaven the soul of a departed sinner.

Contrast with all this the numerous beautiful and touching examples in which history abounds, and not infrequently to be met with in everyday life, of the devotion of one human being to another. Mr. George Bernard Shaw says that sex love is the most transient of human passions, and perhaps it is, but it can be spiritualized and made lasting with the sublimest results in the elevation of character. It uncovers mysterious deeps within the soul, enlarges the whole being, and transforms the arena in which it is exercised, however drab and sordid, into a world of wonder and glory. And, whatever may have to be said of the undependableness of human nature in this regard, our total experience would be immeasurably the poorer and meaner if this mode of manifestation of the eternal life-energy could be taken out of it. It would be difficult to find a fact worth naming, or an object worth achieving, which has no connection with it. This yearning of one soul to lose itself in another, and to find itself in larger measure by so doing, is certainly not a thing to be scorned and repudiated ; if God be not in that He is nowhere.

But leaving on one side all that could be said in defence of the divineness of this kind of love when seen at its highest, surely there can be no two opinions concerning that of a mother and her offspring. Maternal love has been said, and rightly, to be the most unselfish of human feelings. A mother may be selfish on behalf of her child but seldom to the child himself ; she gives, asking nothing in return, gives herself freely, willingly, ungrudgingly ; few children ever know what their mother's love has cost her, for the story can never

be fully told. It is wonderful beyond words. How little it depends upon merit! Indeed, does it depend upon merit at all? How often the mother's tenderest solicitude is reserved for the black sheep of the family! How she will defend him and shield him against the condemnation of others! How pathetically she tries to conceal his misdoing and to see good where others can only see evil! How readily she will sacrifice herself, whether he be grateful or not, if only he can be saved from ruin and despair! Oh, there is nothing in all this unintelligible world to compare with the wonder and the unquenchableness of a mother's love.

Now I do not believe, and I am sure neither can you, that in the sight of God love of this kind can be anything but good and elevating to the soul. It ought never to be pitted against the love we owe to God; indeed, like the author of my text, I do not see how it is even possible to glimpse what loving God means if we have not learned love well under its human aspects. Human love is a sacrament introducing us to that which is divine, and therefore it should be treated as a sacrament, a window through which to view holy and ineffable realities. I will make bold to say that some of you young men have never felt the touch of the eternal, the mystery, the wonder, and the glory of life, as you did when an all-absorbing love for a good woman awoke within your heart; that which transfigured her in your eyes also revealed to your astonished vision something of the greatness and the spirituality of existence; you almost looked upon the face of God. And I would ask any young mother here what it was that arose within your soul the first time you gazed down into the eyes of your newborn babe. In the swelling tenderness you felt for that helpless little atom of humanity, whose life you had nourished with your own, were you not conscious of the closeness of supra-

mundane things? Did you not feel in a manner of speaking that you belonged to all life and all life to you, that your love for your child reached out and laid hold of something far stronger than death and to which pain was but joy in travail? Would you have found much difficulty then in believing that love and life were one?

Here, perhaps, are people who would say that they cannot love God, that they know nothing about Him, that to them He is but a name, whereas men and women and little children are real and near and need such love as we have to give. Are you quite sure you know yourself when you say this? God is the ideal perfection whom to know is to love with a love that has nothing of self-interest in it. As Pascal puts it in a famous aphorism: "To love man we must know him: to know God we must love him." You cannot help loving God if you have ever loved any living thing nobly, unselfishly, and given yourself in doing it. What we love in one another *is* God, but we must learn to reach through the particular to the universal, through the human to the divine.

> He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear Lord who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

You know how to Catholic saintship the privilege of beholding what is called the beatific vision has always been held to be one of the greatest tokens of God's favour. One form in which it has been experienced is that of an appearance of the figure of the glorified Christ to the gaze of the devotee. I quite believe that this has often been experienced, however you may explain it psychologically. I know someone at this moment, whose word I should not dream of disbelieving, who is quite convinced that on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion he saw Christ with his bodily eyes, and consequently, he says, life can never be quite the same to him again, dark and hard though it may often

seem. I daresay then that you have all heard of the praying monk to whose astonished and enraptured vision the Christ appeared one day just as he was quitting his cell to go and minister to the sick at the monastery gate, as was his appointed duty. He hesitated, for he had long hoped and prayed for this great joy which might never be his again. But with a sigh he turned and went, only to find when he came back that the radiant presence was still there. And, looking upon him with kind eyes, the Master said: "Hadst thou stayed I should have gone." Some people have the sense of God—if I may so put it—in a greater degree than others. But this particular faculty, or peculiarity, or whatever you like to call it, does not argue superior sanctity on the part of anyone; it is no sign of exceptional merit any more than the possession of an ear for music; it is simply a trust given for a specific purpose. Some of the best people in the world have never had it. All they have is a certain peace and satisfaction realized in the service of their kind, with perhaps an added feeling that the love they give and receive is an intimation of the presence of something higher from which it comes. Let me say to all such who may happen to be in this ancient church to-day: I would that you might love God for Himself; that you might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; but you are right in seeking for it in the way you are doing, for assuredly God is there. And we have the authority of Christ for saying this: "Lord, when saw we Thee hungry, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

HIDDEN WISDOM

Preached before the Theological Students' Union at Manchester on May 4, 1927

"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." 1 Cor. ii, 7.

The form of the statement here made derives no doubt from the apostle's acquaintance with ideas and modes of speech pertaining to the Greek mystery religions. It is a much discussed question whether St. Paul himself knew anything at first hand about these contemporary cults. There is no real evidence that he did, but he could hardly help being aware of some of their claims and tenets, jealously guarded secrets though these were supposed to be. There are few people to-day who do not know something of the terms employed in the ritual of freemasonry, notwithstanding the fact that the number actually initiated into membership of the craft is small compared with the rest of the community. We can be almost certain that some of the apostle's Corinthian converts had previously been adherents of one or more of these mystery religions and possessed a knowledge of their secret rites and ceremonies. A house of the period, now known as the House of the Mysteries, has been excavated at Pompeii, on the walls of which are pictorial representations of the initiation of a candidate into the fellowship of the Dionysiac mysteries. They do not reveal to us very much of what actually went on in these fraternities, but they do illustrate the fact that what was aimed at was the possession of a higher kind of life than was possible to man in his natural state. After successive ordeals and purifications had been gone through, the aspirant, so it was believed, was able to share in some degree the life of the deity he or she invoked. The experience was held to

be a sort of rebirth, a deliverance more or less complete from the disabilities of creaturely existence, a partaking of eternal reality and perfection.

Those present-day writers must be mistaken, I think, who affirm that there was no ethical element in this process, that it was purely magical, and that immortality alone was sought thereby. On the contrary it is probable that the mysteries to some extent prepared the ground for the Gospel of Christ as we see from such a passage as my text, only one of many of a similar tendency. That Greek religion was lacking in the moral force of Judaism may be freely admitted; but there was a widespread spiritual hunger coincident with the decline of Græco-Roman paganism, of which hunger the mysteries are a symptom, a hunger which Christianity alone showed itself able to satisfy. In borrowing the language of the mysteries St. Paul illustrates this fact, and incidentally demonstrates that he was aware of it. He makes for the gospel he had to preach a claim like that of the mysteries, but a real, not a spurious, one. It, too, he argues, is divine wisdom in a mystery, hidden wisdom, revealed to the initiated by the will of God. This is frankly a figure of speech. He did not mean that there was anything dark and occult in the religion of Christ, anything shrouded from the apprehension of simple minds. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are perishing." It is only veiled, he says, to them who are not spiritually-minded. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." A fact or an experience which is clear and open to him who is spiritually susceptible thereto may indeed seem foolishness to one who possesses no such capacity. The gospel, as the apostle here tells us, was hidden wisdom to the natural man in the world of his day, not because

it was hedged about by artificial mysteries like those of the esoteric societies around him, but because, with all their cleverness and their glorification of human attainment, these Greeks were too secular-minded to receive it, did not come to it in a right spirit and with the heart of a little child.

What is then the open secret of which this preacher of a bygone age believed himself to be the custodian? He has not left us in any perplexity on the subject, for in the very same breath with the utterance which forms my text he says: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." His gospel is that of a Saviour who died that we might live, of a forgiveness made possible by a divine sacrifice, of a righteousness not our own to be appropriated by faith, of a joyful sharing in the life of the risen and exalted Lord, of final victory over sin and death. In the Cross of Christ is summed up, for all who care to learn, the whole meaning of the world's travail and agony; in the Cross is our hope of ultimate triumph in alliance with the will of God. All the theologies that have ever been framed have just been so many efforts to express in terms of the mind what the humblest servant of Christ already knows with the heart, namely, that in a sinful world it is inevitable that by the Cross should the Saviour enter into His glory; and those who have entered most deeply into the fellowship of the Cross have ever been conscious that it contains the clue to the mystery of earthly existence as a whole. Rudolf Otto in his remarkable book *The Idea of the Holy*, says: "Christianity, as it stands before us to-day in present actuality as a great world religion, is indubitably, so far as its claim and promise go, in the first and truest sense a

religion of redemption. Its characteristic ideas to-day are salvation—over-abounding salvation, deliverance from and conquest of the world, and from existence in bondage to the world, and even from creaturehood as such, the overcoming of the remoteness of and enmity to God, redemption from servitude to sin and the guilt of sin, reconciliation and atonement, and, in consequence, grace and all the doctrines of grace, the Spirit and the bestowal of the Spirit, the new birth and the new creature." And he adds: "In applying to the Cross of Christ the category 'holy,' Christian religious feeling has given birth to a religious intuition profounder and more vital than any to be found in the whole history of religion."

Now I put it to you, brethren, is this a gospel which has a much better chance of acceptance in the world of to-day than in the apostolic age? Is it being proclaimed in accents of power by those whose vocation it is to speak to human need in the name of Jesus Christ? Is it what the Church is most immediately concerned with or are we placing the emphasis of our message elsewhere? I am afraid it is only too true to say that it is "hidden wisdom" to a world which is perishing for lack of it, and, if I may be frank with you, I confess that the Church also is failing, and the ministry itself is failing, to declare adequately what the world most needs to hear. Let me see if I can make good this assertion and give reason for the belief that a change of method has become imperative.

In the first place, be it observed, our post-war civilization is characterized by great mass activity—national, economical, social. The youth of to-day will hardly listen to a spiritual message; where it has ideals at all—and I admit that much of the vociferous pessimism of the hour is unjustified in this respect—these are mainly concerned with practical service of a secular

kind. Everybody wants to be doing something, something useful, something ameliorative, something to make conditions better here and now—and God knows we need to have them made better. But what they do not see, what few ever seem to pause to think about, is whether life may have another value than can be fully expressed in terms of here and now. The reaction from other-worldism has gone so far that we are in danger of losing the very ability to perceive wherein the essential values of life consist. The Church is making the same mistake as the world outside, but with far less excuse. Not for a moment would I attempt to minimize the importance of the social gospel, as it is called, or our duty as Christians, a duty too long neglected, to apply Christian principles to the solution of industrial problems. It is for want of clear vision in this matter that we have come to the present dangerous impasse. In former years I have myself done as much as most preachers to appeal to the Christian conscience in regard to this obligation; to-day we are allowing it to obscure greater and more momentous issues. It may be hazardous on my part to venture in this city what may look like a criticism of the promoters of C.O.P.E.C., for instance; but, if you will forgive the colloquialism, I would say to them: You are a day behind the fair. Labour is not waiting for you and does not greatly heed your message. The peril that attends your propaganda is that you are helping to concentrate the thoughts of young men upon what is secondary to our well-being instead of what is primary.

The cardinal error of the Church to-day is that we are talking as though we believe that men could be saved in the mass instead of one by one. In the bizarre words of Francis Thompson, we need to be reminded that

> There is no expeditious road
> To pack and label men for God,
> And save them by the barrel-load.

We are sophisticating conscience by belabouring groups and sections and vested interests instead of compelling attention to our individual awareness of short-coming in the presence of God ; in fact the very thought of God is fading out of many minds that think they hold it. Men do not take the trouble to deny God ; they ignore Him, and in the long run that is fatal both to character and civilization. We shall have to come back to the realization that the way that leads to life is not the way of mass activity, not that of the coercion of other people into what we think they ought to do, not that of *sturm und drang*, but that of the broken and the contrite heart. The hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory is plain and open before us if we would but give ourselves time to seek it.

The judgment thus passed upon the most absorbing interest of our time holds equally true of most of our ecclesiastical and doctrinal preoccupations. They have their importance but it is being greatly exaggerated. Many of those who engage in them are strangely blind to realities. They seem to think that the Church will stand or fall by the acceptance or rejection of this or that mode of worship, school of thought, or method of organization. They are wrong. Not in the earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the still small voice that is scarcely heard is God's real message to the age. The operations of the Spirit of God are not confined to institutions, no, not even to the Church itself, for the Church is not an end but a means to an end. As has been proved a thousand times in history, if the recognized channels of divine grace become choked with refuse, the streams of refreshing from the presence of the Lord will find other means of access to the heart of man. We are hearing much at the present time of the World Call to the Church. The world is not calling very loudly, or, if it is, it is not aware of doing so. Its need is clamant, but

it does not seem to be conscious of the ability of the Church to satisfy that need ; nay more, the world does not know what its deepest need is or where to look for deliverance from its ills. It is stressing temporal values as never before, and the Church is doing the same. These when worthily presented are necessary expressions and implications of the gospel of Christ, but they are not the gospel itself ; the gospel is something other and higher than these, and unless we perceive this and conform our witness thereto, our power to deal even with temporal values in any effective manner will shrivel and die.

The primary appeal of the gospel is to the individual man. It does not stop there but it must begin there. What am I in the sight of God, though there were none other soul in the wide universe of whom that question could be asked ? What am I, apart altogether from my relations with other men or the part I have to play in human society as a whole ? What am I that cannot be expressed in terms of social ethics or earthly well-being? Viewed in this light " there is none righteous, no, not one " ; " we are unprofitable servants " ; we cannot save ourselves.

No one has stated this more clearly than your own Bishop in *Christus Veritas* : " The Christian life is a supernatural life ; we neither make it nor discover it ; God gives it, we receive it. And this is the truth of chief importance to the whole life and purpose of the Church. The most seductive and the deadliest of all temptations that come to man is the temptation to suppose that by himself he can achieve his destiny. It is false. Man can only be all that he is destined to be when God indwells him." And a distinguished Free Church scholar, Dr. E. F. Scott, says almost the same thing in his treatise on the Ethical Teaching of Jesus : " It is commonly assumed, more or less consciously, that men themselves must bring the Kingdom into being.

The very programme of Christianity, as it is often understood in our days, is to establish the Kingdom of God on earth by the concerted efforts of all good men, To Jesus this conception would have been meaningless and even repellent. The Kingdom, as He knew it, was God's, and men could no more establish it than they could make the sun rise in heaven." Dean Inge, with a more austere note and a more stark urgency, contrasts the essential with the non-essential in the religion of the hour : " Our citizenship is in heaven, our life here a pilgrimage. Secularized Christianity ignores or denies this ; and it should by this time be plain that secularized Christianity has neither savour nor salt."

These utterances, dear brethren, define the main issue before the Christian consciousness at this perplexing period in the history of mankind. I adjure you to face it honestly and with fixed determination to arrive at the truth concerning it under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. You are preparing for the greatest of all callings, that of the Christian ministry. Of what nature will that ministry be ? What will you have to impart to the troubled, anxious, passion-ridden world ? Are you going to tell the unprivileged how to voice their grievances ? It may be necessary, but there is a prior imperative. Are you going to commit yourself wholeheartedly to the cause of a party in the Church and strive to make it victorious ? You may be right, but this is not your first duty. Are you eager to clear men's minds of cant and superstition, and, therefore, will you stand for utter frankness in the declaration of truth, cost what it may ? Perhaps you have been divinely chosen for this form of cross-bearing, upon which no servant of Christ should ever venture with light-hearted audacity and defiant indifference to the feelings of others ; but very sure am I that this is not what you ought to begin with. Begin with yourself.

The first soul whose salvation you have to seek is your own. What about the state of your own heart; who knows so well as you the foulness that lurks therein and needs to be cleansed away ere you become fit to plead with men as the ambassador of the Most High? Worthy of this awful office you will never be, but at least you should know in your own immediate experience what God requires of man and how we are enabled to attain it. Do you actually know God face to face? The question is not presumptuous; the answer to it is not a claim to privilege. You must know God or what can you do for men in His name? If you possess no personal fellowship with Christ, how can you reveal Him to a world that talks about Him more than it ever did and knows Him not? "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." "That I may know him," cries the apostle, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comformable unto his death"—here is the ruling motive and purpose of the servant of Christ, to which all others must be assimilated. If you have personal ambitions to serve, keep out of the ministry; if you aim at a great career, keep out of the ministry; if you are in search of wealth or honour, for prudence' sake if nothing else keep out of the ministry; if you want an easy time and the applause which accompanies outward success, keep out of the ministry—it is not for you. But if you know, with the wisdom that is not of this world, the things which pertain unto our peace; if you carry with you the balm of healing for the wounds of mankind; if in your hands you hold the key to eternal treasures then go forward in faith, nothing wavering, and God shall give you increase.

THE THINGS THAT ABIDE

Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on Thursday, October 13, 1927, being the annual sermon of the Church of England Men's Society.

> "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.
>
> PHILIPPIANS iv, 18.

IT is worthy of note that the terms employed in this fine summary of the objects of Christian contemplation are those which were in common use among the Greek moralists of the period to denote the ideals of all high-minded, right-thinking men and women. No doubt this is the reason why the apostle introduces them. It is to be presumed that Greek-speaking people, like the Christians of Philippi to whom this letter was addressed, would be familiar with the current expressions of the philosophic schools. They must often have heard of the importance of pursuing the study of things true and lovely and of good report; they knew, or thought they knew, what these things meant.

So far as the first constituent of this comprehensive idea is concerned, the world in which we live to-day would probably give an even readier response to what is here commended that the people for whom it was originally written. I mean that the mind of to-day, trained in the methods of empirical science, gives to the pursuit of truth a supreme position, at least in theory, among the objects of a rational man's endeavour. Truth at all costs, truth for its own sake, whether agreeable or disagreeable, welcome or unwelcome, is supposed to be the animating desire of every thinker as of every

explorer of the secrets of Nature ; and on the whole I think we might say that fidelity to this principle of action stands high in our day. The most scrupulous exactitude of observation and of statement is required of every student of the mysteries that surround us in the material world and in human nature itself. You would neither respect nor take seriously the work of any pioneer in any field of knowledge if it ignored this primary condition. And so ingrained is the habit of expecting perfect candour from our preceptors in all departments of thought and discovery that it has come to govern our mental processes to a degree that our forebears would scarcely have understood.

The quest of things that are lovely has not been so faithfully pursued. In this respect our generation is inferior to some of its predecessors. If it were not so we would not suffer the uglier products of modern industrialism to persist, nor the public taste to be depraved by bad standards in art, music and literature. The present is not an age that cultivates carefully the sense of the beautiful, as our daily life bears witness. Did not Sir Thomas Beecham in an outburst of anger some time ago say that we as a nation were unable to appreciate fine music, and that jazz and wireless had destroyed any capability we had ever possessed for the enjoyment of grand opera ? Beethoven on a wireless receiver, he declares, was no more like Beethoven than a bull bellowing in a field was like Caruso. The judgment may have been too severe ; it was that of a sensitive artist ; but it was not wholly undeserved. And where are our great masters of the brush and pencil to-day ? Cubism and Futurism compare badly with the period of the Renaissance ; and we must remember that the people for whom St. Paul wrote had seen the Acropolis at Athens in its glory ; they knew what beauty was if they could not analyse it—no man can

When we come to speak of the distinctively moral content of this great text another consideration emerges. As Dean Inge says in his personal confession of faith, moral goodness as an aspect of reality differs from truth and beauty in that it is always more or less relative to the conditions of our earthly lot. But this is only in appearance after all. We can and we do form the idea of an absolutely flawless goodness which could exist without anything to struggle against and overcome and without liability to failure and defeat. We think of Jesus Christ as having exhibited this perfection of character in terms of a single human life, and therefore as the revelation of what God essentially and eternally is and we His children are summoned to become.

The apostle, then, bids us think about these things, the things that are true and lovely and of good report, the highest things of which the soul can have any knowledge. But can we be sure of perceiving them rightly ? This is a crucial question. Can we know for certain that we are on the right track in our quest of spiritual perfection ? Everything depends upon that ; and is it not possible that what is true for one person may be false for another, that what one considers lovely another may condemn as vile, and that what one generation esteems as noble its successor may vote contemptible ? On the surface of things I grant that this is so. Men of exceptional powers of mind have ere now despaired of arriving at truth ; nothing is commoner than to hear some men say that ultimate truth is unattainable. Standards of taste in art vary with climate and race, and so do standards of conduct. Morals, so runs one cynical aphorism, are mainly a matter of geography. This is a shallow conclusion, however. When we begin to interrogate our experience calmly and thoroughly we become aware of the really astonishing

fact, yet a fact beyond all gainsaying, that every man does know when he is facing the right way towards the attainment of what he knows to be eternally valid and immovably secure. Our perceptions can be perverted; we can be rendered rationally, æsthetically and morally blind; but if we allow the deeper soul to speak, we are never deceived as to the path we are taking. To quote Dean Inge again: "At the core of our personality is a spark lighted at the altar of God in heaven—a something too holy ever to consent to evil, an inner light which can illuminate our whole being. To purify the eyes of the understanding by constant discipline, to detach ourselves from hampering worldly or fleshly desires, to accustom ourselves to ascend in heart and mind to the kingdom of the eternal values which are the thoughts and purposes of God—this is the quest of the spiritual man and the scheme of his progress through his earthly life. It carries with it its own proof and justification in the increasing clearness and certainty with which the truths of the invisible world are revealed to him who diligently seeks for them." Or Browning:

> Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows,
> But not quite so sunk that moments,
> Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
> When the spirit's true endowments
> Stand out plainly from its false ones,
> And apprise it if pursuing
> Or the right way or the wrong way,
> To its triumph or undoing.

Yes, we make many mistakes, we enter many blind alleys and have to find our way out again; we are guilty of much self-deception, but on the whole we know perfectly well whither we are tending and why. There is that within us which will not let us rest in anything short of what is eternally right and holy and true.

This, we may be sure, is the reason why St. Paul

employed in my text the very terms that were in use among pagan moralists to express the ideally best and highest that the human heart and mind could conceive. All men know instinctively what these things are, or at least the direction in which they are to be sought; and they know, too, that these inhere in all that pertains to the eternal perfection of Almighty God Himself.

We do not need to look far for confirmation of this statement; everyday life is full of it; literature and history abound with illustrations of it. Mr. Bernard Shaw, for example, is at pains to prove in his long preface to his play, *The Devil's Disciple*, that his scapegrace hero, if hero he be, is not actuated in his self-sacrifice by any considerations of altruism or compassion for the man whose place he takes at the gallows. What, then, is he actuated by? Merely by the sudden perception that he somehow owes it to his own manhood to keep silent when he is mistaken for the rebel whom the British military authorities are hunting for with intent to hang. Owes it to his own manhood? What on earth can that mean if not that this man is made infallibly aware of something written deep in his own soul which is of the very essence of things eternal? He might be puzzled to put that vision of his into words; but there it was; it could not be disobeyed.

A still more illuminating portrayal of this truth of the inner life comes from the pen of Joseph Conrad, and is the theme he works out in that harrowing study of the human heart entitled *Under Western Eyes*. I daresay you all know the plot of that masterly book. Let me recall it to you. A young Russian betrays a fellow-student to the Government and sends him to torture and death. Later on the betrayer meets his victim's mother and sister. For a time he succeeds in wearing the mask of a pretended friendship No one

suspects him, though something in the suffering soul of the bereaved mother detects a false note in his account of himself. At length, at the very moment when all seems absolutely secure for him and he has gained the daughter's love, he himself tears the mask away with despairing ruthlessness, and pours forth the whole black tale in one of the most moving passages ever written. The following few sentences are the core of the terrible avowal :—

> "It was as if your pure brow bore a light which fell on me, searched my heart and saved me from ignominy, from ultimate undoing. And it saved you too. Pardon my presumption. But there was that in your glances which seemed to tell me that you . . . Your light ! your truth ! I felt that I must tell you that I had ended by loving you. And to tell you that I must first confess. Confess, go out—and perish."

There it is, you see. The sign-manual of God. Hell rather than falsehood ; bitterest anguish rather than remain the yoke-fellow of unrepented sin. Let me add that this conviction which all men have, whether they act in accordance with it or not, must not be confounded with aught that is only of the passing day. Here one must be careful to discriminate lest the truth should be distorted or the case exaggerated. What I mean is that the highest values by which the soul lives are independent of anything that makes only for well-being in this world—either of the individual or society. That is to say, they are higher than any merely *ethical* obligation though they include it. This is a distinction not to be lost sight of, though I am afraid it is lost sight of in much that passes for Christianity just now. Let me make the point plainer. We all know what ethical requirements are, and why they exist. As good citizens, as good husbands and fathers, sons, brothers and friends we are expected to behave in certain ways and to avoid conduct inconsistent with

the requirements of these relationships. If life is to be decent, happy and well ordered we must be able to take for granted that, on the whole, our associations with one another will not fall below an accepted standard in this respect. And, mark, if religion had never been heard of, if Jesus Christ had never lived, we should still have to invent and maintain some standard of mutual seemliness and probity in order that existence should be tolerable. Secular well-being is only possible in proportion as men and women learn to put restraint on their passions and their selfish instincts and study to promote the common interest. I repeat that they would have to do this if there were no other gospel to preach and no other ideal to be served. In practice this is the only gospel that many people believe in. Behave honourably and considerately to your fellow-man and all will be well—that is, as well as things ever can be in this very unideal world. It is only just to add, however, that if no better gospel had been preached we should not have got as far as we have with this one. This is a fact of which the man of the world takes no account. If Christ had never lived we should not to-day have developed the kind of character or the practical ethics which the ordinary Englishman respects in himself and his neighbours. And it is also to be acknowledged that the average inhabitant of this country does act up to what is commonly taken for granted in this way, more or less. We can generally depend upon the native kindliness and sympathy and integrity of our fellow-man; the heart of the British public is mostly on the side of what is equitable and honest and straightforward in word and deed.

But, as I have said, when we have admitted all this, the fact still remains that there is an imperative within our hearts which owes nothing to such considerations as these. It is conceivable that obedience to the call

of eternal righteousness might in certain eventualities lead to the destruction of society rather than to its preservation. It is quite imaginable, and has often been seen in actuality that a man has had to sacrifice all that is dearest to him on earth rather than be false to his heavenly vision. Temporal comfort and eternal righteousness are not seldom found in uncompromising opposition; we cannot have both. When crises like that arise there is nothing to be done but to cast oneself fearlessly and without reserve upon the side of immutable purity and truth and abide the issue. This is what our blessed Lord did in the hour of His passion, but the supernatural order has sublimely vindicated the self-offering. The cross of Calvary has because of it become the symbol of man's salvation. There is nothing that this generation so much needs as to recover the sense of the eternal. Our utilitarian civilisation has lost it; we are so preoccupied with the pursuit of things temporal that the thought of things eternal has fallen away from us, and yet without it is nothing great, nothing blessed, nothing pure and lofty in this world or any other. It is because of this loss, comparatively speaking, that we are to-day presenting for man's acceptance a Christ who is nothing more than a Christ of this world, the Christ of the newspapers, the Christ whom all sections and interests, even the most materialistic and unbelieving, are prepared to applaud and admire. To commend Christ as the great exemplar, the way-shower, the teacher of disinterested ethics, is not enough. We are missing the greatest thing of all, namely, that He is Himself the eternal. He and none other is the emancipator, the enabler, the fulfiller; having Him, we have all that is good and abiding; He is the way, the truth and the life.

Think on these things, for they are the tokens of a reality that shall abide when earth's foundations melt

away, healing for the broken-hearted, the far-off interest of tears. "Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." These are the real things of life, the things to cling to when all else is taken from us and we stand naked in the presence of Him who has set our secret thoughts in the light of His countenance. And then may He who is the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely cover us with His own white robe of righteousness and receive us into everlasting habitations.

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